
**Hearing before the Subcommittee on
Space, Aeronautics, and Related Sciences
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate**

and

**Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight
Committee on Science and Technology
United States House of Representatives**

**Oral Statement
Oversight Review of the Investigation
of the
NASA Inspector General
Mr. Robert W. Cobb**

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Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations
NASA Office of Inspector General**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committees, I appreciate the opportunity to appear today to share my experience as the former Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations under NASA Inspector General, Mr. Robert Cobb.

My federal career began over 20 years ago in 1983 as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. I served until 2000 with U.S. Attorneys Offices in such positions as the Chief of the Narcotics Section, Regional Coordinator for the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force, White Collar Crime/Public Corruption Chief, Chief of Major Investigations, and on details with the Department of Justice and the United States Customs Service. For 4 years before I joined NASA, I was the Senior Advisor to the Assistant Commissioner, Office of Internal Affairs, United States Customs Service.

In November 2004, I was selected by NASA Inspector General, Robert Cobb as the Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations. I served in that position until December 11, 2005 when I joined the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General as a Senior Attorney.

My testimony today summarizes some of my experiences and observations while at the NASA Office of the Inspector General (OIG). During my pre-employment interview with Mr. Cobb, he expressed his unhappiness with management in the Office of Investigations by stating the investigators needed a "grown-up" to

supervise. I accepted the position with the impression that Mr. Cobb wished to improve the quality of the work and believed I would be instrumental in that effort.

One of my early experiences with Mr. Cobb was so disturbing that I considered leaving the OIG immediately afterwards. At a scheduled weekly meeting, Mr. Cobb, in front of his deputy and my supervisor, berated me concerning a single word in a letter. In an ensuing monologue, loudly peppered with profanities, Mr. Cobb insulted and ridiculed me. After the meeting, I told Mr. Cobb one-on-one that I did not expect my superior to use profanity, it was unacceptable behavior, and I would not tolerate profanity. Mr. Cobb listened and gave me no indication if he agreed or disagreed. In the months to come, I regularly observed or heard of Mr. Cobb using profanity to humiliate and demean employees.

Mr. Cobb exhibited a consistent lack of understanding concerning federal law enforcement. In two cases approximately six months apart, Mr. Cobb was notified several hours before search warrants were to be executed at NASA facilities by OIG and FBI agents. Mr. Cobb said he would not allow the warrants to proceed before he read the affidavits, despite the fact that the responsible OIG supervisor approved the warrant, the Assistant United States Attorney believed the warrant was sufficient, and it was signed by a United States Magistrate Judge. After reading the warrants, Mr. Cobb's opinions included there was no probable cause established, the Assistant United States Attorney was stupid, the NASA agents must have "hoodwinked" the Magistrate, and Mr. Cobb was overly

concerned about the possible reaction of NASA's senior management. Finally, after much discussion, Mr. Cobb reluctantly allowed the agents to execute the warrants. During my short tenure at NASA, at least 5 other warrants were issued and executed at locations other than NASA property. Mr. Cobb did not express any interest in those affidavits or warrants.

The incident that convinced me I could no longer be effective in my job, occurred in August 2005. Mr. Cobb directed a case accepted for civil prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Central District of California, be withdrawn pending a review of the investigation at OIG headquarters. In my 17 years as a federal prosecutor, I had never seen that done. Mr. Cobb claimed he was not aware the case had been presented to the U.S. Attorney's Office. However, a bi-weekly case reporting document provided to Mr. Cobb in June proved otherwise.

Subsequently Mr. Cobb claimed the NASA special agent in charge of the case who wrote the withdrawal letter was trying to "set him up." The Assistant U.S. Attorney endorsed the work of the case agent, the case preparation, and the investigative report. Yet, in a subsequent meeting about the case, Mr. Cobb leaned over his desk, just feet from my face, his face red, and his fists clenched and screamed at the same time slamming his hand on his on desk so hard I jumped...."you know as well as I do that this report is a [profanity removed] piece of [profanity removed]!"

In closing, Mr. Cobb's arrogance, bullying style, and questionable independence limit his ability to lead the NASA OIG and has in turn demoralized the OIG workforce. As an example, a recently hired employee, after only 2 days at the NASA OIG, called the agency she left requesting her old job back because most of the staff spent a good portion of the workday looking for a way out.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.